

CHAPTER IV

THE TENT AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TENT

The tent is made of pieces of coarse black cloth known as *šukka* (pl., *škak*). The *šukka* is usually 60 to 70 centimeters broad and 15 to 60 *drâ* (11.4 to 45.6 meters) long. The tent cloth is woven either of pure black goat's hair—both the heavy variety, *ša'ar šâfi*, and the light, *nôl*, being used—or else of cotton, with which only a small amount of goat's hair is blended, this being called *kumbok*. The weaving of tent material is carried on by many inhabitants of the towns and villages, and the Rwala buy it from itinerant traders, Rhejbâwijjât or Kbejsât, or from those who make it. An ordinary tent with one main pole, which is about twelve meters long and nearly four meters broad, requires at least eight *škak*, each 15 *drâ* (11.4 meters) in length. If they are of pure goat's hair, *ša'ar šâfi*, 1 *šukka* costs 8 *meğidijjât* (\$7.20); if they are of *kumbok*, a *šukka* costs 3 *meğidijjât* (\$2.70); a *šukka* of *nôl* costs 5 *meğidijjât* (\$4.50). The back wall, *ruvâk*, of such a tent costs 3 *meğidijjât*; the lower part, *sefle*, of it, 1 *meğidijje* (90 cents); 15 *drâ* (11.4 meters) of a narrow strip of goat's hair for strengthening the tent material, *ṭarâjež*, costs 2 *meğidijjât* (\$1.80); two poles cost 9 piasters (40½ cents); and then there are the ropes, sold by weight: 1 *roṭol* (2.56 kilograms) for 13 piasters (58½ cents). Thus the smallest tent made of heavy goat's hair costs at least 33 *meğidijjât* (\$29.70). Every four years, or five years at the most, a new tent has to be set up.

When a man has bought the tent material, he hands it over to the women, who sew the tent under the supervision of an experienced old woman. The old woman gives the following directions: "Draw the separate pieces, *škak*, close together, *ṣaffenhen*; sew them with coarse threads of goat's hair, *hajje-ṭenhen*; in the middle sew on the *koṭb* [a small round board measuring about ten centimeters in diameter and having in

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286 of the pole passes]; sew a strip of coarse goat's hair, *ṭarājež*, along the edges of the tent; at the end of these *ṭarājež* sew (Fig. 3)^a on leather loops, *ḥurb* (l)^a, fastened to strong pegs [about ten centimeters in length]; through the leather loops draw and hook the ropes, both those which hold the tent on its long sides, *aṭnāb* (h), as well as those which hold it on the short sides [of which the front rope is known as *jad* (i), the back one as *riḡel* (k)]; *ḥoṭṭen aṭnāb ḥoṭṭen ḡlèn w-riḡlèn*. Turn down as a hem the upper edge of the back wall, *rwāk* (f), and sew on this hem [which is about ten centimeters broad], *maḥalla*, a strong thread, *ḡerir*, in order that it may be fastened by means of strong pins, *ḥella*; to the lower edge of the *rwāk* sew on a strip of inferior material [about fifty centimeters broad], *sefle*; to both the short sides [for a distance of fifty centimeters from the edge] sew on pieces of lighter tent material [about a meter and a half long]. This border strengthened to a breadth of fifty centimeters is known as *'amāra*, and the material which is sown forms the side wall, *ruffa* (d).

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284 When the tent is to be pitched, its owner calls out to his sons, servants, slaves, or women: "Spread out the tent, *fellū al-bejt* (Fig. 4); extend all the ropes, *marreṭū al-aṭnāb*; drive in the pegs with a wooden mallet, *eṭebtū* (sic) *al-awṭād bel-miḡema* (Figs. 5, 6); wind the ropes round the pegs; tighten the ropes, *ekrebū*, at the front, *al-meždem*, at the back, *kaṣa'*, and at the sides, *česer*, by loosening their ends in the loops, *ḥruba*, drawing them taut, and securing them, *'aliṭ* or *'aljeṭ* (Fig. 3, m); prop the poles up, *'emdān* (Figs. 7, 8), first those in the front on the side away from the wind, *esemkū al-mežādīm* (Fig. 3, a), then the main pole, *esemkū al-wāseṭ* (b), thrusting it into the *koṭb* opening in the middle of the tent, and finally the two poles at the rear corners, *česer* (c); when all the poles are standing, tighten all the ropes, *karrebū al-aṭnāb*; attach the back wall to the windward side (Fig. 9) with iron pins, *rawwežū al-bejt*, and peg its lower part, *sefle*, down to the ground so that the wind may not lift it; do the same also with the side walls, *ruffa*; from the main pole and from two loops sewn on the edges of a *ṭarika* strip hang a central partition, *kaṭe'a*." This dividing partition, 1.6 meters high, cuts the tent into two compartments, the right-hand one

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592 ^a This figure represents my large tent of the kind used by the 'Aḡejl camel traders. Its rear wall and pegs differ from those of the common Rwala tent.

^a In the following descriptions of the tent the text letters refer to Fig. 3.

342 being for the women, *maḳ'ad al-ḥarim*, the left-hand one for
 592 the men, *maḳ'ad ar-reḡāl* (or *rab'a*). The partition with a
 283 hole through which the women are fond of peeping at the
 guests is called *sāḥa maḡḡūḡa* (or *kāte'a maḡḡūḡa*). The ropes
 known as *aṭnāb* as well as those called *mkūt* (pl., *mukṭ*) are
 of hemp. If such a rope is thin it is called *maras*. *Ḥabl* (pl.,
ḥbā') is the name given by the Rwala only to the ropes which
 they themselves make of camel's hair.

FURNISHINGS OF THE MEN'S COMPARTMENT; THE FIREPLACE

352 When the tent has thus been firmly set up, they carry into
 286 it the whole equipment, *ḥelle*. "Place the furnishings, *eḡeḡkū
 al-ḥelle*," orders the owner. In the men's compartment the
 ground in front of the dividing wall is covered with a carpet,
 either bought, *ḡaṭīṣa*, or else made by the Rwala women,
ma'aneka, upon which are laid quilts, stitched and filled with
 cotton, *farše* (pl., *frāš*), either of the European pattern, *leḡeḡ*,
 or of an Oriental pattern, *ṭarrāḡa*. Upon these are placed pillows,
 one meter long and 30 centimeters broad, filled with wool or
 camel's hair and sometimes also covered over with a broad
 woollen shawl, *šāḡ*. A pillow is often replaced by a camel's
 saddle, against which it is easier to rest.

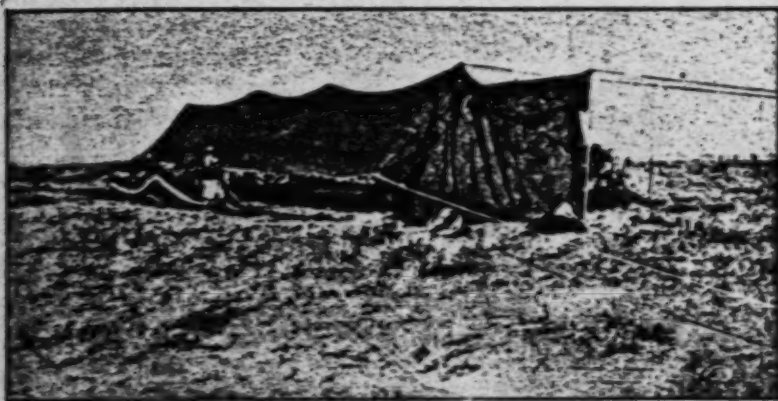
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 [291] The master of the tent and his guests remove their shoes
 or boots, which they place behind them against the dividing
 wall, while they hang their rifles on the main pole in the
 women's compartment and sit down on the carpets, drawing
 their legs in upon it. A man when thus seated usually sup-
 ports his side, *murtaci*, or back, *mutasanned*, on the pillow
 or saddle. When a man is narrating a story, he sits on his
 crossed legs, *mutarabbe'*. During a meal he kneels on his left
 knee and sits on his left heel, *kā'ed 'ala rkubeh w-nuṣṣ*; while
 inspecting anything or testing a weapon, he kneels on both
 knees and sits on his heels, *bāreč 'ala rkubeh*; when he washes
 his hands, he squats, *mež'i*; if he sits down with his arms
 round his knees, he is referred to as *mufaḡḡež*. When it is
 hot, he lies down on his stomach, *mumbaṭaḡ*; when he takes
 a nap, *jeṣāčče'* (or *jinūd*), he turns over on his back, *muta-
 salṭi 'ala ḡahareḡ*, or lies down with his face resting on his
 hands, *mufannes*, or turns over on his side, lays his hand under
 his face, and goes to sleep, *nājem miṡḡeda'*.

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against the back wall. The sacks are either black, made of goat's hair, *haras*, or gray, made of wool and camel's hair, *'edel*, and there are also colored ones woven by the Rwala women and known as *raffârijje*.

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FIG. 2.—Pitching a tent: attaching the rear wall.

The spindle, *merzel*, is shaped like a four-pointed star measuring nine centimeters in diameter and provided with an opening in the center. From this there projects the end of a pole, *'id*, 35 centimeters long, in which a small iron hook, *sunnâra*, is passed. The woman who spins takes the camel's hair or sheep's wool under her right armpit, while with her left hand she twists a thread about thirty centimeters long, ties it to the lower part of the spindle pole, and thrusts in under the hook. Then she raises her left knee and, placing the lower end of the pole upon it, twirls the spindle on her knee with the palm of her left hand, while with the fingers of her right hand she winds the thread. This, running through the hook, is now twined around the whirling pole, which once again has been allowed to hang freely. If the movement of the spindle gives out, it is set whirling again in the same manner. The women do their spinning while riding on camels and also while marching on foot. They keep the wool or camel's hair either in their laps or in their bosoms. If they wish to have a stronger thread, they weave two or three prepared threads together on the spindle.

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Fabrics are woven on a loom, *naṣw*, the names of the dif- 000

Fabrics are woven on a loom, *naṭw*, the names of the different parts of which as shown

in Fig. 10 are: a, *rās an-naṭw*; b, *sidā*; c, *ḥaṣ'a*; d, *nīra*; e, *'ūd an-nīra*; f, *minšāz*; g, *'āzba* (or *leḥama*); k, *minša*; h, *ḥatwa*; j, *kā'a*; l, *ḥiṣa*.

The best silk kerchiefs and garments are kept in a small box, *ṣandūk*, which has a thin lining of tin.

By the side wall are placed the litters, either *ḡetab* or *kenn*, and the saddle bags with brightly colored trappings and long tassels, *mezweḍe*.

The *kenn* (pl. *knene*) litters (Figs. 11, 12, 13) resemble rectangular cages, narrower at the bottom, and are made of wooden poles. The main poles forming the frame are called *'aṣjān* (Fig. 11, c), the four cross poles joining the main poles are called *mibṭāḥ* (b), and the vertical pole which strengthens the two back cross poles in the middle and terminates in a wooden knob is called *rwē'i* (a). The *kenn* is fastened to the saddle known as *bedd* (or *wiṣr*) (d).

The *ḡetab* litters (Figs. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) are decorated in the most splendid manner. On the back of the camel is placed a saddle known as *wiṣr*, reinforced with cushions, *bdūda*. Upon these rest two pairs of wooden ribs, *ṣlāf* (Fig. 14, f), each terminating in a cone, *rwē'i* (a, j). Two pairs of flexible poles, *'aṣfūr* (d) and *ḡa'ade* (g), each more than 5.5 meters long,

Fig. 10—A loom, *naṭw*.



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